

Early Years

for Levels 4, 5
& Foundation
Degree

EDITED BY
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SECOND
EDITION



DYNAMIC
LEARNING



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Study skills for higher education

Louise Dryden

Introduction

Starting a new course of study is an exciting prospect, and enrolling on a Foundation Degree programme opens a new chapter in your professional and academic career. As a new student, you will be enthusiastic about returning to study, but perhaps a little apprehensive about the challenges that lie ahead. This chapter will help you to recognise the

expectations of higher education programmes at Levels 4 and 5, and aims to prepare you for the months ahead by building on the study skills that you already possess. Establishing study habits, exploring individual learning preferences and honing academic literacy skills will help to make your Foundation Degree a meaningful and enjoyable experience.

Learning outcomes

This chapter will enable you to:

- reflect on and evaluate your previous study experiences
- be confident in your ability to organise your study effectively
- understand the expectations of higher education study at Level 4 and Level 5
- acquire a range of note-taking skills
- increase your academic reading skills
- understand the importance of careful planning, leading to successful assessment outcomes
- recognise the importance of correct referencing and avoiding plagiarism
- recognise the importance of critical and analytical skills in enabling you to demonstrate your deeper understanding of a topic
- become skilful in identifying academic reliable sources of information.

Transition into higher education

Studying at degree level requires that you take on greater responsibility for your own learning. Previous study, perhaps at A Level or National Diploma level, will have prepared you for this transition. You will have recognised that at Level 3, better grades were awarded for work where you moved from being purely descriptive towards demonstrating your ability to explore and discuss the material. Higher education takes you further along this route. As an adult learner, at college or university, you will need to take responsibility for your own learning journey. Lecturers will be there to guide and support you, but you will be expected to be independent and self-regulated in a way that may be new to you as a student.

You already possess academic skills which you will be able to transfer to this new programme. Study is part of a spiral curriculum where existing skills, prior knowledge and understanding are built upon and deepened. You will have previously developed a range of transferable study skills, such as the ability to understand and grapple with new concepts, and to organise and express your ideas verbally and in written form, and you will know how reading enhances your own learning.

Lectures at degree level require a higher level of engagement by the individual learner. Good attendance is crucial; every lecture will include important information and there is generally little time for repetition. Taking an active part in live lectures enables you to engage with tutors and clarify your understanding. Taking ownership

of your developing understanding is the key to success. Listening attentively and making notes is not going to be enough; discussion and debate with fellow students will heighten your ability to understand and analyse the subjects you are studying.

Andragogy – being an adult learner

Returning to study as an adult learner will probably be very different from your previous educational experiences. Andragogy (an idea revived by Knowles, 1990) is a term used to explain how adult learning may differ from pedagogy (learning as a child).

Knowles (1990) considered that adult learners want to know *why* they are learning things. This theory recognises that adult learners, unlike younger pupils, have a pool of experience to draw upon and that they want to link their studies to their existing knowledge. Adult learners like to be more independent and in control of their own studies; they are intrinsically motivated and wish to be given options, and have their views respected. To this end, Knowles (1990) suggests that a practical, problem-centred curriculum is most appropriate for adult learners, one where they will be able to see immediate benefits in their personal and professional life.

Reflective task

1 Rate these statements from 1 to 5, where 1 = most important and 5 = least important.

Knowles (1990)	Statements	Rating
Self-concept	Take responsibility for your own learning.	
Experience	Use your previous experiences (personal and professional) as resources for your current studies.	
Readiness to learn	Your studies should include developing your general life-skills.	
Orientation	Your studies should focus on problem-solving and practical application.	
Motivation to learn	Motivation should be intrinsic (for self-satisfaction) as opposed to extrinsic (to reap rewards).	

(Based on Knowles 1990:57)

2 Do you consider that Knowles is right in his assumption that adult learning is different from the way in which children learn?

3 Some critics suggest that there is a conflict of ideas here, that the adult student's supposed focus on practical application could be seen as extrinsic, rather than intrinsic, motivation. Would you agree?

Your Foundation Degree programme is designed to help you make strong connections between theory and your existing knowledge, and current childcare practices. Coursework will frequently require you to directly analyse these connections, with the result that you should be able to recognise some shift in your working practices, alongside a deeper understanding of child development and teaching and learning strategies.

Time management

Embarking on a new course requires you to step back and carefully consider your current lifestyle and the various commitments which fill your waking hours. You should be realistic about how much time you have available; perhaps you need to fit in a busy work schedule alongside college or university attendance, private study, and home and family commitments.

Reflective task

1 Use this table to indicate how you currently use your time. Include work, home, social and sporting activities.

Day of the week	Early morning	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

2 Now use another colour or highlighter pen to show how you can adjust your current schedule to accommodate your studies. Put in the periods of attendance at lectures alongside opportunities for private study, such as

reading and research in libraries. Remember that this timetable will need further adjustment when coursework deadlines are looming.

You will need to experiment to find the timetable that best suits your lifestyle and body-clock. For example, if you are studying for the Foundation Degree while holding down a full-time job, early mornings may be a very productive time, especially as your mind is clearer after a good night's sleep. However, many students with parental responsibilities find it best to study after their children are in bed; this can make for very long days, and lack of sleep can become a problem. If you are a parent, it is a good idea to arrange for a partner or family member to help out at weekends, freeing up some quiet time for study, especially when you have an assessment deadline approaching. If you do not have any immediate family who can help, try to find someone who is willing to care for your children for a few hours, perhaps someone for whom you can return the favour when your schedule is quieter.

It is important to recognise that your return to study also affects the people around you. You should ensure that your close family understand the process you will be going through. Be sure to make time for them so that they do not feel neglected. If you are working, your relationship with your colleagues also needs consideration; you may need to ask them to take part in your work-based projects or swap shifts with you. Be aware that you may encounter envy from those who feel that they have had fewer opportunities for career advancement.

Managing stress

It is important to recognise that studying will become stressful at times; there are few students who do not consider abandoning their studies at some point in their course. When you recognise that you have reached such a crisis point, take a break, talk to a friend (perhaps a fellow student) and try to consider rationally what has caused you to become despondent. Exercise can be a good stress-reliever; if you already go to the gym or swim, make sure that this appears on your timetable. If you are not used to making time for exercise, taking part in an activity such as going for a walk can help to clear your head.

Colleges and universities normally offer a variety of student support services; these can range from help with academic writing and offering financial advice, to counselling for anxiety and personal issues which may arise while you are studying. These services are there to help relieve the pressures that sometimes occur during your studies. They are all strictly confidential; your programme tutors do not need to know that you have sought help unless you choose to tell them.

Planning for study

Planning is a crucial aspect of any successful project. It can be argued that successful study comprises 80 per cent organisation and 20 per cent inspiration.

If you make careful preparations, the process should be less arduous. The difference between home cooking and cordon bleu cuisine is attention to detail; general staff in professional kitchens meticulously prepare the individual elements of a dish in advance, so that chefs can concentrate on the final processes which make their food exceptional.

There are several important study practices which you can establish at the beginning of your course that can save you many hours throughout your journey towards graduation. Establishing effective study habits as you embark on this new programme will enable you to concentrate on the more enjoyable and creative aspects of study.

First, find a study space and a place to store your materials. You may have a room with a desk and shelves that can house your files and books; however, for most people, this is an impossible luxury. A kitchen table and a box where you can store your papers and books are sufficient. Some people have amazing powers of concentration and are able to study amid the hurly-burly of a family living space, while others need a quieter, more tranquil atmosphere away from others. Whatever your personal circumstances and preferences, you need to experiment until you find the conditions which suit you best. Remember, you can always go to a local library or use the computers at your college or university to work in a quieter environment, with the added benefit that you can ask library staff for help.

Reflective task

- 1** Use this table to consider your previous study habits. Answer the questions to consider what helped or hindered your success.

School and college	Did you find it easy to organise your time?	Did you find it easy to organise your materials?	What was most challenging?	What strategies helped you to be successful?
Coursework				
Essays				
Exams				
Presentations				
Practical tasks				

- 2** Considering the answers you have given, was there a pattern to your previous experiences?

- 3** How can you change your habits to help you as you embark on your new course of study?

It is important that you store your notes and research materials systematically. It helps to separate subjects; this will enable you to file information effectively in a way that will be easy for you to retrieve. If several modules cover similar ground, it may be useful to store them together, especially if a new module builds on your knowledge and understanding from a previous one.

Some materials are best stored electronically – for example, lists of useful websites. Again, you should organise them in such a way that you can access them quickly; you may decide to list them alphabetically or organise them by subject matter. It is good practice to build up an electronic bibliography for each piece of work.

At the beginning of a new module, it is helpful to make an audit of your existing knowledge. Consider what you already know about the subject and check to see if you have any books or articles which are related to the topic.

Attending and preparing for tutorials

A tutorial may be a new experience for you: it is a private opportunity for you to meet a tutor to discuss your understanding of a module or prepare for a piece of assessment. You may feel a little daunted at first, but tutorials are the perfect time for you to receive individual

support and feedback of a type not available during lectures. It is best to prepare for the tutorial – go armed with a few questions or perhaps the plan for a piece of work you are doing, and *always* make notes during the discussion.

Being part of a learning community

You will make some new friends during your programme of study, people who have similar interests and share your passion for working with children. You may find yourself engaging with particular students with whom you have a special affinity, though working with everyone in the group is also important. Seek out people who you feel work in a similar way to you and build a relationship with them. Perhaps find a 'study-buddy', someone to discuss your work with; once you have built up trust with each other, you can take on the role of 'critical friends'. A critical friend will give honest feedback, providing praise and supportive criticism in equal measure.

Listening to feedback and advice can be difficult. It is hardest when you feel that you have put a great deal of effort into something and it appears not to have been acknowledged. It is best to listen to or read the feedback and review the advice privately, taking time to really understand what the person is telling you. You may not agree with them, but you will have had the opportunity to consider a fresh perspective on your work.

Lectures

It is a good idea to prepare for lectures in advance. You should look at the module handbook, find out what the topic is and, whenever possible, do some preparatory reading. Colleges and universities have virtual learning platforms which provide access to many useful files and documents relating to your course and the individual modules. If you have begun to think about the lecture topic before you arrive, you will be more receptive to the content when the lecture begins. You will have had an opportunity (perhaps on your way to the lecture) to recollect your existing knowledge and consider what you would like to get out of the session – you may even have some questions that you would like to ask. All of this will help you to be much more participative in the whole learning experience.

Taking notes to find out what works for you

Reflective task

Find a set of notes that you have taken recently from a lesson, lecture or a staff development event. Looking back at these notes, consider these questions:

- How useful are they in retrospect?
- Do you think that they are an accurate record of what happened?
- Have you captured all the important facts and some of the details?

There are several different note-taking techniques. It is a good idea to experiment with several of them until you find the method that suits your learning style the best. Below are several different techniques for your consideration.

Dictation

The biggest mistake that many students make is to try to write down everything that is said. Unfortunately, this means that the writer does not engage with the material, nor can they fully participate in the lecture. Many students do this as they fear they might miss something important; scribing everything is seen as an insurance policy against missing vital information. The problem with this method is that the writer is not using the lecture to make sense of the material; they are reliant on doing this on their own after the lecture.

Annotating lecturers' slides

Many lecturers publish their PowerPoint slides or notes on the virtual learning platform before the lecture takes place. This is a very effective method of taking notes because the student can print these off in advance and annotate the sheets while fully participating in the lecture.

Linear notes

Linear notes are the most commonly used method. These notes use headings and subheadings to separate different material (thoughts, concepts, and so on). Phrases and key words or concepts can be quickly written down using bullet points, and students develop

a set of abbreviations for frequently used words or terminology. Using colour to highlight particular content or indicating the level of importance can make these notes more effective.

The popular Cornell method (Burns and Sinfield, 2016; Hopkins and Reid, 2018) is similar to the linear method, but here the page is divided vertically into two columns. Notes are made in the larger right-hand column during a lecture, or while reading. Later, the left-hand column is filled in to highlight important information. Finally, at the bottom, the student summarises their learning. This procedure encourages deeper engagement in the learning process.

Diagrammatic notes

Taking notes using a diagrammatic technique, such as mind-maps (Buzan, 2006) or pattern-notes (recommended by Burns and Sinfield, 2016), encourages the student to make links between ideas and concepts in a non-linear manner. This method nurtures a creative approach, where the student seeks to make sense of new material by making connections with existing ideas and concepts.

Using a laptop

Some students find it convenient to make lecture notes on a laptop, which requires efficient typing to be effective. This has become popular, though this method can interfere with the student's ability to participate actively in the lecture, and necessitates using a linear style of note-taking. However, it is often recommended by those supporting students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

Taping lectures

In some instances, students may seek permission from the lecturer and their fellow students to make voice-recordings during lectures. This can free them to actively participate in the lecture, but it requires a huge time commitment, since for every hour of the lecture they will need at least another hour to replay the taped material and make notes.

Experiment with different styles of note-taking until you find the one that works best for you. Whichever you choose, leave spaces for additional thoughts, links to previous learning, or questions that remain unanswered.

Making the most of lectures

Your lecturers take the time to prepare their sessions very carefully. Most will begin by explaining which material they are aiming to cover during the lecture, and they will discuss how this links to the overall learning outcomes for the module. The lecturer's opening statements will set the scene for what is about to follow, and you should listen out for 'signposts' and summaries that they provide during the lecture. Lecturers usually stress the most important points they are making, and often repeat or rephrase these key pieces of information several times.

Many lecturers intersperse their lecture with opportunities for you to engage in debate with your fellow students. These exercises encourage you to be an active participant in the learning process (see below). Some programmes include seminar sessions which enable you to take part in discussions relating to preparatory reading. Again, these activities encourage an active engagement on your part; be sure to do the required reading so that you can make the most of the debate that follows.

It is worth taking time to summarise what you have learnt at the end of each lecture. You can do this by jotting down a couple of sentences at the bottom of your notes, or use the journey home to reflect on the information you have gathered. These activities allow you to consider any questions that remain unanswered so that you can ask for clarification during the next lecture or tutorial. It is also very important that you review the notes you have taken; this allows you to check that they are meaningful, enabling you to fill any gaps which you did not have time to expand on during the lecture. This process will enable you to feel confident when referring back to the lecture notes at a later date, and also helps you to memorise key information.

Listen, think and debate

Follow these points to make sure that you are as active as you can be during a lecture:

- Listen carefully.
- Think about what is being said.
- Check your understanding.
- Use every opportunity you are given to discuss ideas.
- Make links whenever possible to previous knowledge and experiences.

- If you have a retiring nature or are lacking in confidence, you may not wish to make contributions to general class discussions, but do ensure that you make the most of opportunities to express your ideas in small-group work.

Working in groups

Most lecturers will organise their sessions to include varying amounts of student participation. These group tasks and discussions encourage you to be an active rather than a passive learner. They will help you to engage fully in the curriculum and encourage you to examine the subject matter, debate the issues and consider the opinion of others. These types of exercises help you to explore new ideas and will be useful when you review your understanding of a topic for assessment purposes.

You should take full advantage of these opportunities to discuss, debate and analyse material with your fellow students; practising these debating skills will help you to write balanced arguments in your written assessments. While you should listen carefully to what other students have to say, it is important to get involved. Sharing information is an integral part of working in groups. Some students can be anxious about proving their competence and may feel compelled to hog the limelight, while others only want to listen, trying to keep their ideas and knowledge to themselves. To be effective, everyone in the group needs to have an opportunity to voice their opinions or suggestions. If one extrovert personality dominates a group, it is up to the other group members to try to ensure that there are equal opportunities for all.

Often lecturers will ask for a spokesperson to feed back to the larger group after a group discussion. Try to take on this role when you can, even if you find it makes you feel a little nervous. Feeding back in this way gives you the chance to practise important skills, including the ability to summarise and succinctly explain new information. These skills will really enhance your ability to write critical and analytical essays.

Accessing reading materials

Course and module handbooks will have a list of texts (books, journal articles and websites) which are particularly relevant to your programme of study. Many students like to own a few key texts. Despite the advances in

technology, many of us have a very personal relationship with the books we use, an attachment which is hard to foster with an e-book or a website. However, do not buy books until you have had the opportunity to evaluate how useful they are likely to be; consider whether the content could be relevant to more than one module.

At the start of your course, you should become familiar with your institution's library systems, and learn how the books and journals are catalogued. Colleges and universities will provide library orientation sessions run by members of the library staff team. There can be a number of students trying to borrow the same books, so do not be disappointed if you cannot get the titles from your reading list. If you cannot find the book you want, it is always worth browsing the shelves to find alternative titles on the same subject.

Technology allows us access to a worldwide library of texts, including e-book editions of many popular titles. Colleges' and universities' catalogues can usually be accessed from home, which enables you to search for material even when your work schedule means it is hard for you to visit the library. You should familiarise yourself with subject-specific, online information, texts and journals. Always verify the authority of online sources, or you may find yourself referring to an essay written by a poorly informed undergraduate in Florida! You also need to be aware of the country/society of origin of the text, and whether specific material (such as legislation) is relevant to the UK. When undertaking individual research, a librarian familiar with the field of childcare and education may be able to suggest a broader range of suitable sources.

Reading for academic purposes

We are all constantly reading for a variety of different purposes. We may unconsciously glance at an advertising hoarding on the way to work, college or university, study the instructions for a new gadget, or read a magazine or novel for pleasure. The depth of our comprehension of the material varies with the content and context. Reading for academic purposes most closely mirrors the comprehension required when reading an instruction manual, because we need to read carefully, taking in as much of the detail as possible.

Academic reading requires a unique set of active 'deep' reading skills. Reading of this type requires that you give your full attention and, like an athlete, you may need to build up your capacity to spend lengthening periods of time at this intense activity. Stop reading from time to time

to check that you have been reading deeply; if you can put the author's ideas into your own words, this will prove that you have really understood the content.

When you begin a new module, you should read the handbook carefully and become familiar with the indicative reading suggested by your tutor. At degree level, you need to show that you have also read around the topic to get a better understanding of the issues under investigation. There are different schools of thought regarding the age of the material you access. Some institutions require that all your references come from publications no older than five years, and others no older than ten years, so consult your course handbooks and module tutors on this subject. Legislation and curriculum matters are constantly changing, making the date of publication crucially important; likewise, you must always be wary of the age of any statistics you discuss. However, these rules restricting you to recent publications mean that in some topics you cannot cite the original works of great theorists, such as Piaget, but rather have to rely on secondary sources such as commentary on the theory to be found in recently published work.

Making notes while reading

Always have a pen and paper beside you as you read, so that you can jot down interesting facts or information. Consider keeping a small exercise book with you when you visit a library; in this way you will know where to look when you require the information at a later date. The best way to prepare for academic reading is to set yourself questions in advance so that you have a specific focus or question that you are seeking to answer.

Making notes as you read is a critical component of your study toolkit. Note-taking helps to keep your mind on the task and ensures that you are fully engaged with the material. It is important that you make notes systematically. When you select a text, online or in paper form, the first thing you should do is record the full reference information, including page numbers where applicable. It is enormously frustrating and time-consuming if later you need to find the material again and you cannot remember where to locate it. Writing precise reference details also means that you have all the information you will need to make accurate citations in your written work. You should devise a clear system, indicating where you have transcribed (quoted) the precise words of the author, and where you have put their ideas into your own words.

All professions and disciplines have terminology which you will need to become familiar with. There are also abbreviations, acronyms and subject-specific jargon that you may need to learn. Your 'reading notebook' may be a good place to make a list, a glossary that you can refer to.

Finding material

Some advice on how to find material for your work:

- Familiarise yourself with suggested texts from the module handbook.
- Read the synopsis on the back cover of a book, or the abstract of a journal article, so that you can see if it is relevant to your subject of study or assignment reading.
- Read through the list of chapter headings in a text.
- Scan the index looking for key theorists, topics, concepts, and so on.
- Select a chapter: read the introduction for content and to judge whether you find the style accessible.
- Check the credibility of the source: who is the author – is it a professor or a student?
- Select domain names which indicate scholarly material (for example, .gov, .ac.uk, .edu).
- On the internet, look for objectivity or possible bias (for example, .org).
- Focus on materials published in the UK or which are relevant to the country you are studying in.

There are several important skills which will help you to locate the information you are searching for:

- Try to increase the speed of your reading – you can practise this skill while reading a newspaper or a novel.
- Skimming – this entails reading very quickly to get a general impression, which will tell you whether it is worth re-reading more fully to get the detail of the author's ideas and argument. Initial and concluding paragraphs usually provide useful signposts.
- Scanning – this entails looking out for particular headings and keywords, to see whether the author explores the topic you are particularly interested in.
- Reading for meaning – slow down when you find material of particular interest or complexity, checking that you understand the author's argument.

Referencing

As discussed above, it is important to keep notes on everything you read. When presenting academic information verbally or in written form, you are expected

to support your discussion with published material from other authors and sources. This is known as *attribution*. You need to give clear details of where you found (*sourced*) the information so that your audience or reader can verify your supporting evidence or follow up the topic for themselves. Poor referencing can lead to allegations of plagiarism, which is the suggestion that you have used other people's ideas as if they were your own. Plagiarism is taken very seriously in academic circles and can lead to suspension from your studies, so it is important that you reference your work effectively and correctly.

There are two ways in which references support your academic writing. In the main body of your essay or report, you provide *citations*. These are partial references which provide minimal information, such as the author/s' surname and date of publication. A full *reference list* will be displayed at the end of your writing. This list needs to include all the information you have gathered such as the title of the article, book, chapter, as well as publication details and whether it is published online or in book form.

When using (*citing*) the ideas and theories of other authors, you must identify the source. You can write this in two ways:

- Immediately indicate your source; for example, 'Mercer (2018) suggests that ...'
- Give the information and put the citation in brackets at the end, such as (Mercer, 2018).

Frequently you will need to cite *secondary sources*, where you have found the information in a piece written by a third author. For example, you want to discuss ideas relating to Piaget, but rather than going to the original material, you have read about his theories in a more recent publication. You need to clarify this by indicating the source of your information:

Piaget (cited in Mercer, 2018) emphasised ...

Where you have the year of publication by the original author who has been cited in another source, you write:

Bowlby (1982, cited in Mercer, 2018) considered ...

Paraphrasing and quotations

Paraphrasing an author's idea is a skill which takes time to acquire. Appropriate paraphrasing demonstrates your ability to understand and synthesise new material in your own words. You need to succinctly express a concept or theory, composing a sentence in your own style, avoiding the words and phrases used in the original

text. You can practise this skill by explaining (verbally or in writing) an idea, and then checking whether your summary or interpretation accurately reflects the original. Do not be tempted to just find alternative vocabulary (synonyms), nor should you try to keep the same sentence structure as the original text.

Quotations require the brief citation information (author/s and date of publication) *plus* the pages on which they occur; the quoted words need to be inside quotation marks. Short quotes can be incorporated into the sentence they are being used to support. Quotes longer than a sentence should appear in their own paragraph, but you must signpost very clearly which paragraph they are supporting. It is not a good idea to directly quote lengthy sections of other authors' work, as this suggests to the examiner that you have not analysed or fully understood the material for yourself. It is much better to demonstrate your comprehension by putting the ideas into your own words.

If you do feel that a *direct quote* is essential:

- Ask yourself why you feel the need to use the author's exact words. Occasionally it *is* appropriate, particularly if it would be hard to express their idea as clearly.
- Use short quotations in your essays – one phrase or sentence should be sufficient.
- Lead into a quote (using words such as 'suggests', 'concludes', 'believes', 'explains') and ensure that you make it part of your discussion.
- Explain how the author's idea or theory is related to your discussion.
- Include the page number(s) and date of the work.

Details required in references

References require the full details of the source: the author(s), publication date, title and publisher information. They are listed in the reference section in alphabetical order by authors' surnames, set out in the following way:

- author(s) (and/or editor(s))
- date of publication; edition where relevant
- title of book, article, essay or chapter
- contributor's name and chapter title if in an edited volume
- publisher information if in book form (town and publishing house)
- journal title, date and page numbers of the article
- the web address for online materials and date retrieved.

Table 1.1 Examples of referencing for different sources

Source	In the main body of your essay	In the reference section
One author	Cottrell (2019)	Cottrell, S. (2019) <i>The Study Skills Handbook</i> . 5th ed. London: Red Globe Press.
Two authors	Wyse and Cowan (2017)	Wyse, D. and Cowan, K. (2017) <i>The Good Writing Guide for Education Students</i> . 4th ed. London: SAGE.
More than two authors	Eales-Reynolds <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Eales-Reynolds, L., Judge, B., Jones, P. and McCreery, E. (2013) <i>Critical Thinking Skills for Education Students</i> . 2nd ed. London: SAGE.
A chapter from an edited book	Dryden (2017)	Dryden, L. (2017) 'Language Acquisition in a Digital Age'. In Kaye, L. (ed.) <i>Young Children in a Digital Age</i> . Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 30–45.
Citing from a secondary source	Piaget (cited in Mercer, 2018)	Mercer, J. (2018) <i>Child Development: Concepts and Theories</i> . London: SAGE.
Newspaper article	Bloom (2018)	Bloom, A. (2018) 'Suffering in Silence'. <i>Times Educational Supplement</i> , 2 June [online]. Available at: www.tes.com/news/suffering-in-silence-1 (accessed 1 May 2020).
Journal article	Zebroff and Kaufman (2017)	Zebroff, D. and Kaufman, D. (2017) 'Texting, Reading, and other Daily Habits Associated with Adolescents' Literacy Levels', <i>Education and Information Technologies</i> , 22(5): 2197–216.
Internet	Pappas (2013)	Pappas, C. (2013) <i>17 Tips To Motivate Adult Learners</i> , 26/04/2013. Available at: https://elearningindustry.com/17-tips-to-motivate-adult-learners (accessed 1 May 2020).
Acts	Children and Families Act (2014)	Children and Families Act (2014). Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/section/69/enacted (accessed 1 May 2020).
Government documents	DfE (2018)	DfE (2018) (Department for Education) <i>Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook</i> . Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-handbook (accessed 1 May 2020).
Government documents	HM Government (2018)	HM Government (2018) <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children</i> . Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf (accessed 1 May 2020).
More than one publication from same source in the same year Add an 'a' or 'b', etc. to avoid confusion	DfE (2017a) DfE (2017b)	DfE (2017a) <i>Study of Early Education and Development (SEED): Impact Study on Early Education Use and Child Outcomes up to Age Three</i> . Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627098/SEED_ECEC_impact_at_age_3.pdf (accessed 1 May 2020). DfE (2017b) <i>Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five</i> . Available at: www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2017/03/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf (accessed 1 May 2020).

Referencing online sources

Referencing online sources is a complex task. Material on the internet does not always provide all the information required for accurate citations. For example, articles appearing on the internet may not have a date, in

which case you will need to read the material carefully to try to ascertain how recently it was written (see earlier comments on the currency of legislation and statistics). Some reputable national organisations will have interesting information posted on their websites, but it is not always clear when the piece was written,

nor whose views are being expressed. You will need to decide whether you think the authors are providing an unbiased, balanced opinion. Reputable organisations and websites usually state at the end of their home page 'Last updated' in addition to the year of original publication.

Cite them Right (Pears and Shields, 2016) explains how to cite accurately from websites. You need to give the date you 'accessed' the text from the internet and give as much information as possible about the source, authors and date. Also, your college or university will have reference guidance and examples on its virtual learning platform.

Critical and analytical skills

Writing at degree level requires that you demonstrate a depth of understanding; it is not enough to just show your knowledge of the topic under discussion. In previous study programmes, particularly at school, it may have been enough to show that you had learnt a series of facts, but at this level you need to show 'ownership' of the material. This requires you to demonstrate analysis and synthesis.

Your essays should demonstrate that you have studied the subject matter and that you are able to identify and clarify the underlying concepts and issues relating to the topic; this takes your work from being descriptive to being analytical. This skill requires you to collect evidence by reading widely so that you explore the ideas of a number of relevant theorists and authors. You then use these sources to generate a discussion, enabling you to debate important aspects of the subject. Where there are conflicting views or counter-arguments, you should provide a balanced argument supported by the evidence you have gathered. Guidance on reflective and critical writing skills are discussed in Chapter 2.

For the Foundation Degree, you are at liberty to include some evidence from your own work experiences, synthesising the theoretical elements of your study with your practical experiences. You may give your opinion, but you must be wary of generalising or making assumptions based purely on your own limited experiences or research. Be sure to evaluate your ideas, supporting them with substantial evidence by referring to other authors.

Academic writing

Written language is different from spoken expression, where gesture and tone amplify and support our ability

to communicate and where we are able to respond to the listener. Written communication needs to be concise to ensure that the reader understands the message we are trying to convey. Punctuation and grammar are vital to good written communication; punctuation takes the place of the pauses and emphasis found in verbal expression. Your college or university should be able to provide you with some support if you feel unsure of written English.

One of the best ways to improve your academic writing is, in fact, reading. The more you read, the better your own written style will become. Gradually you will find yourself adopting some of the techniques and expressions that you find in journal articles and textbooks, and these will help you to develop your own written 'voice'.

Planning and drafting

Planning written assignments can appear daunting when you begin your studies. However, with careful preparation, this can become a very satisfying, skilful activity. There is a commonly held misconception that writers are able to sit down with a pen, or at a keyboard, and the words just flow onto the page. This is a totally unrealistic expectation for almost all of us. No matter how experienced a writer is, planning is *the* most important tool; the second is drafting and redrafting; and the final skill is editing and proofreading.

Preparing to write

The first thing you need to do when starting to plan an essay or report is to ensure that you fully understand the task that is required of you. Highlighting key words in the assignment brief helps you to extract the most important aspects, and check that you fully understand the task. A useful exercise when preparing an essay, for example, is to try rephrasing the question in your own words and then checking that your version mirrors the original.

Once you are clear about the task, you can begin to gather the material you need. It is always a good idea to brainstorm everything you already know on the topic and to revisit your lecture notes from the relevant module(s). Make a list of questions which will help you to read around the subject and fill in the gaps in your knowledge. Then, search through any books or articles you already have, skimming and scanning for relevant information which can support your discussion. Make time to search for new material online or in your college library. Thorough preparation will save you time in the long run.

Once you have gathered sufficient material, you can draw up a plan on a mind-map or linear notes, using major headings to organise the ideas. When you have done this, add the sources you are planning to use to support the different sections. This technique will enable you to see where you have sufficient theoretical support and where you may need to do more research.

When the plan is almost complete, you need to consider the most effective (rational) order in which to write up the ideas. An essay needs to build an 'argument' which flows, smoothly leading the reader from one idea to another, and counterbalancing different perspectives where appropriate. When you are planning your essay, you can number the headings or spokes on your plan, to show the order in which you are going to address the individual sections.

Organising an essay or report

Assignments should have three major sections:

- 1 an introduction, which explains the intent/purpose
- 2 the main body where the discussion/analysis takes place and
- 3 a conclusion that brings the piece to a satisfying end.

You can compose the introduction *after* you have written the main body; it is your opportunity to explain to the reader how you are going to tackle the task. The conclusion indicates to the reader that you have almost finished, by summarising your thoughts on the topic. It should not include any new material, nor should it repeat statements you have already made. It can suggest new avenues that you would like to research in future or, particularly in a report, make recommendations for the consideration of others in the field.

Throughout the planning and writing process, you must be mindful of the word limit. You should always write at least the minimum number of words; if you do not, it suggests that you have not done enough research. On the other hand, cutting down very large scripts which far exceed the word limit can be an arduous task, and sometimes important information is culled if you do this in a hurry. You can control this by allocating approximate word limits to the sections on your original plan. While you are typing, keep an eye on the word count available on your screen.

Drafting an essay

Using the careful preparation described above will make writing the first draft of your essay more straightforward. Each of the major ideas you have on your plan will be expanded into prose in a series of paragraphs.

Every paragraph should focus on one central idea; it is important that the opening sentence should signpost to the reader what you are about to discuss in the sentences that follow. Remember that one sentence does not constitute a paragraph, however long it is. If you find yourself composing a string of sentences, find ways to weave them together into a paragraph. This is where your detailed planning will help you to organise your ideas, showing you how to tie a series of points into a coherent paragraph. On the other hand, be sure to avoid producing very long paragraphs; divide them into shorter, logical sections with perhaps three or four sentences at the most.

Drafting a report

A report has a more formal structure than an essay. The purpose of a report is to present and analyse information or data in an objective way. It is organised using clear headings, often with numbered sections and sub-sections. When writing reports, you can include lists, bullet points, graphs and tables, with supplementary material in appendices. The concluding section will frequently include recommendations.

Other organisational features

You might need to include these features:

- **Cover page** – you need to follow the instructions given to you by your particular institution. Usually, the cover page will include the course and module information, the title of the piece you have written and your candidate (student) number. Normally you will be told not to put your name on your work – your assignment will be *blind-marked* (this means that the marker cannot identify you while they are assessing your work).
- **Pagination** – again, you need to follow the guidance your college provides, but it is always best to number the pages. Some institutions ask you to put your candidate number on each sheet; use the 'header and footer' tool for these additions.
- **Reference list** – you need to list all the sources you have used in the main body of your work in alphabetical order, by authors' surnames.
- **Appendices** – these include any additional evidence, relevant documents, field notes or observations which you have used to support your assignment. They are *not* a repository for material that you have not had time to discuss! Each appendix must be referred to at least once in the main body of the

text, and should be numbered to reflect the order in which they first appear. Appendices are not part of the word count.

- **Abbreviations** – the names of organisations and documents can be referred to in abbreviated form but you must give the full title the first time you mention them, with the abbreviation or acronym in brackets for example: Foundation Degree Award (FdA).
- **Glossary** – a list, in alphabetical order, of terms and abbreviations you have used in your assignment.

Redrafting your essay

The second draft is your opportunity to step back from the original composition and explore how well you have explained yourself. Try to put yourself in the position of the reader and examine how clearly you have organised the material and how well the ideas/argument flow. Make adjustments, moving sections and paragraphs around until you feel happy that you have a cohesive discussion. Linking paragraphs with suitable conjunctions will help the flow of your work.

The third draft is where you consider the technical aspects of your essay. At this stage, you need to ensure that you have expressed your ideas in the clearest manner possible. Check for sentences which are too long, as these might confuse your reader; use punctuation carefully to divide complex sentences into manageable phrases.

Proofreading

Proofreading is your last task. This is where you make final adjustments, looking not at the content but at the spelling (typing errors) and punctuation, checking that all citations and links to appendices are correct. You might like to ask a friend or relative to read through your work, as they do not need to understand the subject to help you with this process.

Tips for reducing the word length

Follow these points if your written work is too long:

- Check that *everything* you have written is directly relevant to the task or essay title.
- Refer back to the assessment criteria and learning outcomes.
- Check to see if you have repeated yourself. The same material might have been used in several places – decide where it is most relevant.
- Proofread your work carefully, and look out for places where you could use one word instead of three!

Plagiarism detection software

It is essential that all the work you hand in during your course is your own original writing. Many academic institutions require students to submit their assignments using plagiarism detection software (such as Turnitin). These systems check your work against published texts and other students' essays, providing a summative 'similarity percentage score'. Your tutors will advise you on acceptable scores (even repeating your candidate number at the bottom of each page can count as plagiarism), so usually candidates are allowed around 5–10 per cent similarity. Some systems allow you to test similarity by uploading a draft before the final hand-in date, but you should check with your tutors if their software allows for this.

Plagiarism checkers make judgements by comparing your writing with other texts. As a rule, more than a five-word string will be viewed as plagiarism, so it is important that you learn to express an author's ideas without using their original words. You can practise this by regularly verbalising or writing a sentence which summarises a concept or viewpoint. The more complex the ideas, the trickier you might find this, so occasionally you might decide to include a short quote, which makes a point succinctly. Ensure that you have used quotation marks and indicated the source so that when it is highlighted by the software, the reader can see that you have cited it correctly.

Preparing for seminars and presentations

Seminars are an opportunity for you and a group of fellow students to engage in a rich discussion on a particular aspect of your subject. They are frequently based on specific reading material which you are required to prepare in advance. It is crucial to the process that all participants have done the preparatory reading; if they have not, they will benefit less from the exercise. Sometimes the groups are organised so that members take it in turns to lead the discussion. When it is your turn, prepare questions to elicit discussion from your fellow students. You can, for instance, choose an interesting or controversial idea, or perhaps read aloud a short extract from the text, which you believe will prompt enthusiastic debate.

Full participation in this type of seminar can generate rich material for your essays, helping you to look at the

topic in detail, and enabling you to scrutinise your ideas and formulate your opinions. You may need to defend your views during the seminar, and this in itself is an extremely useful exercise, helping you to scrutinise your supporting evidence and listen to the opinions of others. You can take some notes in seminars in much the same way as you do in a lecture so that you can reflect on the discussion at a later date.

Presentations are frequently part of the assessment requirements for a module, and can take many forms. You might be asked to prepare an individual presentation (for example, to discuss a child case study) in front of your peers and tutor. For formal assessment purposes, it is usual for two examiners to observe the presentation so that sufficient evidence is available to attribute marks.

Planning a presentation

Check that you fully understand the requirements of the task. Read the instructions carefully and, as with essays, underline or highlight the key words. You will have a short time to display your understanding of a given topic, and you should not waste time on material which is not directly relevant to the task.

Presentations need the same type of careful planning as an essay. Scrupulous attention to detail during the early stages of preparation will save you time later and help you to have a clear structure. First, review your existing knowledge of the topic, then make a list of the type of supporting evidence you require. For some presentations, you will need to gather primary evidence such as observational notes or interviews with practitioners as well as secondary supporting evidence, doing further reading to widen your theoretical understanding.

Once you have gathered the material, you could plan the presentation using a diagrammatic format (as discussed above). Generally, you should focus on about five main points that you wish to make and use these as headings to organise your talk. Like your other work, a presentation should have an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction explains how you plan to discuss the topic, indicating the major points you are going to make, and the conclusion will signal that you have come to the end of the presentation, leaving the audience with a final thought or observation. Poor presentations stop abruptly, as though the presenters have run out of ideas, whereas

a good conclusion ties up loose ends and provides a neat ending. You will need to include a reference list.

Supporting aids

Attractive supporting materials enliven your presentation. It is common practice to use PowerPoint slides to display material on a screen. If you use this method, remember that you should not have too much material on one slide; use a large font size (25–30 pt) so that you are not tempted to write too much on a line.

It can also be helpful to use props such as appropriate artefacts which you can show or even demonstrate to your audience. You might be asked to design a poster presentation, where you display your material creatively on an A3-sized sheet. Again, selecting the major points and making them prominent features on the poster will add clarity to your presentation.

Delivering the talk

You will be given a time allocation for your presentation; around 10 to 15 minutes, according to the weighting it contributes to your module assessment. You will need to practise your timing, as a small amount of material takes a surprisingly long time to present verbally. Timing is normally very strict; if you over-run, you could be stopped before you have presented all your material, which will affect your grade. You can practise alone with a stopwatch, or find a 'critical friend' who will time you and provide some supportive feedback on your presentational style.

Some courses require you to hand in a copy of your slides for examination purposes, or provide handouts for your peers. As with all academic work, you are required to reference your sources on handouts and PowerPoint slides, providing a reference list with your presentation.

Presenting to an audience

Follow these guidelines when making a presentation:

- Always face the audience and maintain as much eye contact as possible.
- Speak clearly, and try not to rush.
- Make the delivery lively and interesting – you can use humour.
- Use your visual aids to help the audience; they should not be a distraction.

- Try to look as if you are enjoying yourself, even if you are nervous.
- Wear something that makes you feel good and helps to boost your confidence.
- Most importantly, remember that the audience are your peers. They are going to be receptive to your ideas, without being critical.
- There are a number of YouTube videos about public speaking which provide helpful tips.

Group assessments

Students are sometimes required to work with other students to plan presentations as part of their assessed coursework. This can be a very effective learning opportunity, where you work collaboratively with your fellow students, share knowledge and understanding, and utilise the particular talents and expertise of individual group members. These situations can also have their drawbacks.

Collaborative work can be a very enriching experience, but sometimes certain individuals see group activities as an opportunity to sit back and let others do the work.

This needs to be addressed by the group at the start of the exercise. It should be made clear to everyone that the tasks will be shared, engaging the strengths and talents of particular individuals. A timeline should be drawn up, with several interim points scheduled when progress can be monitored.

Marking schemes may have an element of self-assessment, which allows individual members to consider their own contribution alongside the contribution of those they were working with. Tutors should be made aware of any difficulties which the group has failed to resolve, despite their best efforts.

Sharing group presentation tasks

These guidelines can help a group task to run smoothly:

- Discuss the task carefully.
- Share out the tasks fairly.
- Clarify the scope of the individual tasks carefully.
- Produce a timeline and set manageable, short-term targets.
- Organise visual aids, PowerPoints, posters.
- Have a practice run-through before the presentation.

Reflective task

Copy and complete the following table to consider the pros and cons of working with one or more other students on a piece of assessed work. In the third column, consider how these difficulties might be addressed.

Advantages of working collaboratively	Negative aspects of working collaboratively	Possible ways of avoiding or resolving the negative issues

Next steps

As you proceed through the Foundation Degree, academic expectations will be increased. During the second year of the degree, the assignments will become longer and you will need to demonstrate deeper levels of understanding and a greater ability to analyse the material. You should read more widely as you will have had the chance to become familiar with the professional literature appropriate to the discipline, and you will also be more

confident in selecting appropriate sources for material on statistics and current legislation. You should also be more critical of your own academic writing skills, and be able to use the literature you access to help model the way in which you express your ideas.

The expectations for Level 5 and above are that you will research, read and reference academic peer-reviewed academic journals.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined practical guidance on study skills that you might find useful. You will find a number of very good study guides, and a few are listed below, should you wish to

read in greater depth. Hopefully, you will find satisfaction in studying and begin to enjoy the artistry of completing a good piece of work.

Evaluate your ...

Study skills

- How are you going to fit your studies into your busy schedule? What adjustments might you need to make?
- Which style of note-taking do you think will suit you best?
- How confident do you feel about sourcing and referencing material from books and the internet?
- How might you organise your materials when planning for assessment tasks?

Further reading

- Burns, T. and Sinfield, S. (2016) *Essential Study Skills: The complete guide to success at university*. 4th ed. London: SAGE.
- Cottrell, S. (2019) *The Study Skills Handbook*. 5th ed. London: Red Globe Press.
- Hopkins, D. and Reid, T. (2018) *The Academic Skills Handbook*. London: SAGE.
- Neville, C. (2016) *The Complete Guide to Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism*. 3rd ed. London: Open University Press.
- Pears, R. and Shields, G. (2016) *Cite Them Right: The essential referencing guide*. 10th ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Peck, J. and Coyle, M. (2012) *Write it Right: The secrets of effective writing*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Useful websites

- English Lessons 4U *How to give the BEST PowerPoint presentation!* Available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHhqWbl0y4M
- Harvard Referencing Guide. Available at: www.citethisforme.com/harvard-referencing
- How to Study.com. *Study skill articles*. Available at: www.how-to-study.com/study-skills-articles/
- Macmillan Skills for Study website. Available at: www.skills4studycampus.com
- Mometrix.com. *How to take Cornell notes properly*. Available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErSjc1PEGKE
- Open University [GB] website: *Study Skills*. Available at: www2.open.ac.uk/students/skillsforstudy/

2

Becoming a reflective practitioner

Lyn Trodd and Nancy Small

Introduction

If you are currently studying for a degree in early years, one of your hopes may be that people see you differently. If you are already working as an early years practitioner, you may feel ready to assume more challenging responsibilities in your work with children. Whatever your situation, you will have certain expectations and aspirations for the future. One of the main ways to become the best you can be in your early years work is to become a 'reflective practitioner'. According to Schön (1983, 1987), being reflective is one of the defining characteristics of professional practice.

In this chapter you will explore the concept of reflective practice as a way to develop yourself and your practice, and so create the best possible opportunities for children's learning and development. The structure of the chapter is based on a holistic view of human consciousness – it arises from processes of being, becoming and belonging. Theories of reflection, reflexivity and critical reflection are outlined. The interplay between an early years practitioner's relationships and reflection as well as reflective practice are explored, and the day-to-day reality of reflective practice is discussed.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the chapter you will:

- know some models and frameworks for reflection and critical reflection
- understand reflection, reflexivity, critical reflection and reflective practice
- begin to apply the concept of reflection to your professional interactions and development of your practice
- learn how to give and receive feedback
- understand the role of the mentor.

What is reflection?

Students are sometimes perplexed when they get back an assignment and the marker has written a comment such as 'Develop a more reflective approach' or 'Your work is mainly descriptive and lacks reflection'. It is difficult to respond to this developmental feedback if you do not understand what writing reflectively looks like. Although there are some differences of opinion about aspects of reflection, there are some characteristics which most people agree on.

A simple working definition of reflection is that it is a 'looking back' on experiences so as to learn from them and construct knowledge about yourself and the world. It is accepted that reflection is occurring when you are:

- trying to make sense of an experience and find the meaning or significance in it
- looking at something in detail and thinking about why it is as it is

- thinking intentionally and purposefully, seeking to answer questions and find solutions
- developing and challenging your understanding by asking yourself searching questions about your experiences, thoughts, ideas, attitudes, values and theories
- seeking the truth, acknowledging difficult realities, taking everything into account.

It is a process that goes beyond ordinary thinking and obvious answers; it is a way of reprocessing your existing feelings, experiences and knowledge to learn from them, create new understanding and engender change. Thus, it helps you decide what to do next time and how to do it.

If your tutor gives you feedback that you need to write more *reflectively*, consider whether your writing tells the reader the facts of what happened or explores, explains and considers the possible implications, causes and potential improvements that could be made. Ask yourself

whether it relates the whole story, or chooses to focus on the most significant elements of the story and relates them to an idea or theory.

Classic theories

There are many models or frameworks of reflection, and it would serve no useful purpose to try to list and describe all of them here. Not everyone accepts that such models or frameworks are needed or valid. A model is a simplification of reality and can be used as a tool for you to reflect. Models and frameworks of reflection can provide a structured way to process and assimilate our experiences which are often unclear and confusing. They can provoke valuable questions to ask ourselves and help us make sense of our world.

All of the models of reflection share similar elements: they take careful note of an incident, strive to understand it, learn from it and then modify the actions that were taken.

Dewey's reflective stages

Dewey (1933) saw an important distinction between impulsive action, routine actions and reflective actions. Impulsive actions are based on trial and error. Routine actions are shaped by 'prejudices, that is, prejudgments, not judgments proper that rest upon a survey of evidence' (Dewey, 1910:4–5). Reflective action is shaped by 'the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it' (Dewey, 1933:9), without which practice is based on random considerations.

Dewey (1933) did not believe that reflection needs to follow a set sequence of stages. However, his theory describing the process of reflection can be summarised broadly as follows:

- 1 You recognise that a problem or thought-provoking event has happened.
- 2 You try to interpret the event using existing knowledge and understanding.
- 3 You use your intelligence and skills to describe and explain the event thoroughly.
- 4 You use your thoughts from point 3 to change your perceptions and expectations.
- 5 You alter your approach or thinking in order to improve or change things.

When students read a description of Dewey's stages in reflection, it often reminds them of Piaget's notion of schemas and the processes of adaptation, assimilation, accommodation, equilibration and organisation (Piaget, 1954). Just as Piaget thought that children actively construct knowledge and understanding as they manipulate and explore the world, Dewey thought that individuals develop, deepen and evaluate their knowledge and understanding through reflection.

However, Dewey's theory of reflection can be criticised for emphasising and simplifying the superiority of reflective actions over impulsive and routine action (Furlong and Maynard, 1995) as if it is always recognisable and easy to distinguish the differences in the messiness of lived experiences. It is sometimes seen as being unduly judgemental and dismissive about unreflective practice, viewing it as having less moral and ethical value.

Nonetheless, it is important to see Dewey's thinking in its historical context. He was a man of his time who was fiercely critical of unquestioning teaching of rote learning, and who could see the links between education, experience and important issues such as progress, democracy and emancipation. For Dewey, reflection is fundamental to achieving these higher purposes.

Schön's theories of reflection

Knowledge-in-action

Schön's model represents a process that begins with the practice wisdom and common sense that is used in work contexts. Schön (1983) called this underpinning theory translated into action 'knowledge-in-action'. It is often the knowledge about which Polanyi (1967:4) wrote: 'we can know more than we can tell.' In many ways this is rather like a tacit schema of practice that has been developed thus far. It is knowledge that is revealed in the way a practitioner approaches problems and carries out tasks. It is very difficult to bring knowledge-in-action consciously to the surface of one's mind and express it explicitly in words. It is usually derived through observational learning by another person that is offered as feedback or through reflection-on-action.

Reflection-in-action

When a surprise, problem or unexpected issue is encountered that cannot be dealt with using a practitioner's knowledge-in-action, the practitioner may

seek other answers and solutions in order to understand and manage it. This reflection-in-action is informed by the practitioner's knowledge and experience. It occurs at a time Schön (1983) calls the 'action-present', while the surprise or problem or unexpected issue is being addressed and when practitioners think about what they are doing while they are doing it, also known as 'thinking on your feet'. The practitioner's reflections-in-action guide the ongoing and immediate decisions so that they think in a new way and adjust what they do to meet the needs of the circumstances.

Reflection-on-action

Reflection-on-action occurs when practitioners look back on events, think about what occurred and ask questions in order to understand their experiences and modify their schemas of practice accordingly. It is a conscious process which is sometimes documented during staff supervision, by reflecting on what you have done and discussing it with your manager to establish what might have been done differently.

Double-loop learning

In collaboration with Argyris, Schön (1974) developed a theory that practitioners have mental maps or theories-in-use that guide their actions which are different from the theories they say they espouse. Theories-in-use are implicit in actions, but espoused theories are the narratives we use to say what we do or what we would like others to think we do.

Furthermore, goals, values, plans and rules tend to be used in practice rather than questions. Argyris and Schön (1974) describe this as single-loop learning. However, for Argyris and Schön (1974), when the variables that govern a practitioner's actions are scrutinised and questioned, double-loop learning occurs. This offers a powerful force for change. It is only through questioning our actions, behaviours and values that we can begin to make changes that respond to the environment.

Schön's ideas about reflection in professional learning are very influential. However, they have also been criticised as being applied too loosely and being based on evidence gathered in professional development sessions about critical cases, rather than in everyday practice where a 'routine situation comes to be perceived as problematic' (Eraut, 1994:144). In response to being criticised for being unrealistic about practitioners' capacities to engage in all his reflective processes at the

same time, Schön went on to make distinctions between reflection during actions (*reflection-in-action*) and after actions (*reflection-on-action*), and he acknowledged that some professional actions take place over a period of time (1983).

Reflective task

Journal an account of a time when there was a health and safety incident that occurred when you were working with young children.

- 1 Narrate the account to a student colleague explaining how you felt, what you did, why you did it and how you knew what to do (or not) (*reflection-in-action*).
- 2 Now tell your colleague your thoughts on why the incident happened, whether you did the right thing, what you could have done differently and what you would do next time (*reflection-on-action*).
- 3 Together, discuss whether it is easy/possible/realistic to reflect-in-action.

Reflecting with children

The HighScope curriculum uses a simple model of reflection for children to develop their own skills of reflection, as shown in Figure 2.1.

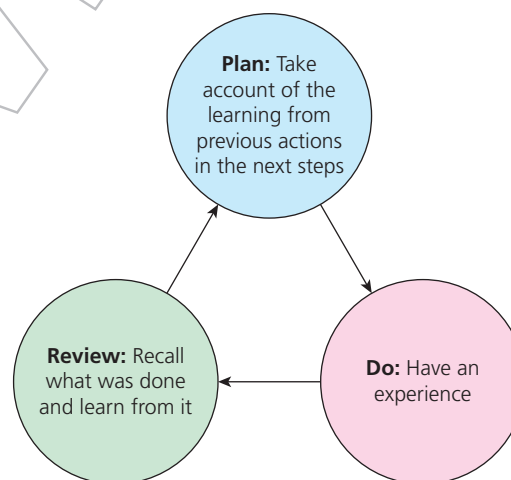


Figure 2.1 The HighScope curriculum model: Plan, Do, Review (2003)

As early years practitioners, you will recognise this model of reflection in the way you approach child-initiated learning when children 'Plan, Do and Review' their learning. It is an approach used in the HighScope curriculum (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2003) and promoted in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in which practitioners are advised to 'Model the plan-do-review process yourself' (Early Education, 2012:7).

Rolfe *et al.* – Developmental model of reflection

Rolfe *et al.* (2001) suggested another very simple framework for reflective practice based on Borton's (1970) developmental model. It asks three questions:

- 1 *What?* (Describing the experience): What were the gains and losses, feelings and thoughts, issues and outcomes?
- 2 *So what?* (Theorising about what has been learnt): So what have you learnt about yourself, others, possible improvements, etc.?
- 3 *Now what?* (Identifying the next steps): Now what can you do so that more can be learnt, and things can be better?

At first sight, practitioners are bound to appreciate the attractive simplicity of the models from Greenway or Rolfe. However, they provide tools for reflection rather than helping you to understand what reflection is by describing the processes involved.

Kolb's cycle of reflection

Kolb's (1984) reflective cycle shares many characteristics with those of Dewey, Schön, Greenway, Rolfe and others. It is widely used perhaps because it counters any suggestion that reflection is merely academic navel-gazing. What distinguishes it is the emphasis on trying out or testing the learning that occurs as a result of reflection within the reflective cycle. For Kolb, reflection is not complete until 'active experimentation' has occurred.

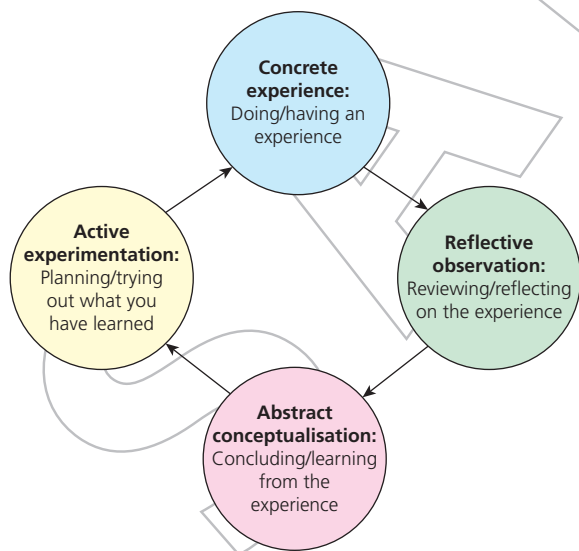


Figure 2.2 Kolb's cycle of reflection (1984)

Kolb, David A., *Experiential Learning: Experience as a source of learning & development*, 1st ed., © 1984. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., New York, New York.

Like the proverb 'To know and not to act is not to know', Kolb's view is that reflection is realised in the action that it creates.

However, Kolb's model has also been criticised because it gives little detail about the actual process of reflection and its lack of an evidence base. It is sometimes seen as rigid and sequential in its nature, and unduly simplifying learning from reflection (Smith, 1996).

Reflective task

Try out Kolb's model by applying it to a difficult situation that has occurred recently with a parent of a child or a colleague in your setting. Describe the event(s). Reflect on them. Identify what you learnt. How did you use what you had learnt?

Gibbs' reflective cycle

Gibbs' (1998) reflective cycle and a model of reflection proposed by Boud (2001) are unusual in making feelings an explicit dimension of their models of reflection, and thus including 'feelings' in their frameworks.

Unlike Kolb, Gibbs' model is more specific about the processes of reflection and so it is often seen as more helpful and useful for people working with children and families, especially with regard to engaging in reflection that has a positive impact on practice.

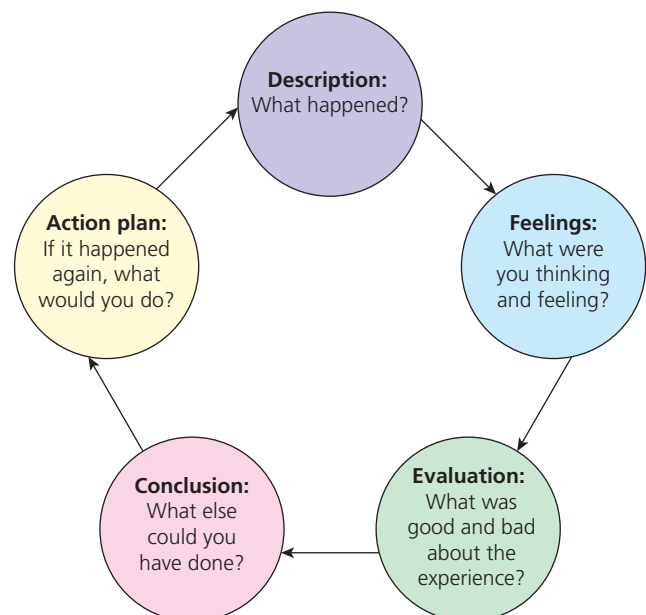


Figure 2.3 Gibbs' reflective cycle (1998)



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